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ABSTRACT

There are numerous ways in which parents can assist students in social studies. Parents can read aloud library books that deal with social studies; older peers can also read aloud, providing practice to the older student as well. Parents can relate current events to a nearby globe, locating places mentioned in newscasts. In addition, parents and students can visit historical places of interest in the community. Parents can also show students the importance of economics in daily life, the environment, and community activities, such as the election process. Students can take part in hands-on activities as well, creating models of businesses on city blocks, volcanoes, furniture from a specific time period, or maps. Social studies work at home can inspire students' interest and work in school. (PM)

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# Helping Your Child in Reading in the Social Studies.

by Marlow Ediger

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## HELPING YOUR CHILD IN READING IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES

There are a plethora of ways in which the parent may assist pupils in social studies. Parents may then read aloud library books which children understand dealing with the social studies. The reader may notice how interested the child is in the library book. If the child is not interested in the book, a different one may be read aloud. Older peers may also read aloud to the younger child. This may provide needed practice to the older child in reading content. Picture books may be substituted, in whole or part, for those which contain considerable print.

There should be a globe near the TV or radio which can be referred to in locating places when a place is mentioned in a newscast. This is a good way to relate current events with globes. Wall maps are relatively inexpensive to purchase. These also should be used. A child may wish to compare the globe with the map when locating places. Parents need to learn along with their children. Learning is enjoyable and life long in its endeavors. Listening to newscasts can be an excellent way for the child to learn more social studies content.

### Relating Home Studies to the School Curriculum

It is good if the home can assist the pupil to do well in the school social studies curriculum. The child may bring to the home setting the basal textbook from the school. Here, the parent and the child may read together and discuss what has been read aloud. The discussion may center around selected basic ideas of subject matter read. It might also include the child raising questions for which answers are located in the textbook or from another reference source.

Second, the parents and the child should visit historical places of interest in the community. Background information needs to be obtained first and discussed before visiting the place of historical interest. As much as possible, history must become alive. Too frequently, the child thinks of "old" places as being unimportant. And yet, the present is based on the past. Items in a museum provide sequential learnings when connecting the present with the past. To illustrate, the modern combine to cut wheat or corn ws preceded by a pull type combine pulled by a tractor. The pull type combine was preceded by a grain binder which was pulled by a tractor and produced bundles of wheat, tied with twine. The bundles had to be hauled to a threshing machine which separated the grain from the straw and chaff. Before that, the farmer cut the wheat with a knife and with a strand of grain tied a set of stalks to make a

bundle. This took approximately 150 years of time in cutting wheat by hand to the use of the modern combine.

Third, the child needs to go along with the parents to shop for food items. The child should then notice which goods are purchased and how these are paid for. The child should also be aware of salaries parents receive for work performed to buy goods and services. When an appliance repair person comes to the home to repair an item, the child may notice that a service is performed. People buy both goods and services. This is the world of economics.

Fourth, from diverse news reports and current events programs, the child may notice how the natural environment is changing. Floods, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, mud slides, avalanches, and erosion are changing the earth's surface. Children also need to notice what is done to relieve suffering of human beings due to these happenings. Parents need to be highly involved in discussions with their children on happenings pertaining to the world's scene. Using illustrations in newspapers, magazines, the internet, CDs, DVDs, and TV within discussions assists in clarifying ideas with the child.

Fifth, parents need to check out books from the public library dealing with social studies topics. Books on the developmental and understanding level of the child might be checked out pertaining to different nations on the face of the earth. Library books may also be checked out pertaining to the following topics: agriculture, animal life, factories, cities, manufacturing and trade, the Bill of Rights, government, minorities, elections, holidays, among others, in which human beings are involved. Social studies has, as the heart of its academic discipline, the study of human beings and exhibiting good citizenship.

Sixth, parents need to have children see and discuss, developmentally, the following: check book balance, monthly bank statements, income tax papers, and receipts from buying items at different kinds of stores. The young child should learn as much as possible about the economic world.

Seventh, parents should take their children on excursions to notice social activities in society. These include the following; a place of voting on election day, a bottling company and other places of automation, and building sites for homes. All places must be safe and possible for guided visitation.

Eighth, children with parental assistance may make the following models:

* a city block showing representative kinds of businesses. Empty cereal boxes may be used for making store fronts.

* a model volcano from plaster of paris.

* a model farm scene containing the latest in innovations such as a commercial beef cattle feed lot.

* a bedouin tent village for nomadic dwellers.

* fall, winter, summer, and spring seasons, each shown in a diorama. A diorama is a three dimensional scene showing different activities, for example, of a season; winter might show a holiday or other festivity.

Ninth, children together with parents may make a collection. A leaf collection from diverse varieties of deciduous trees collected in fall can make for a beautiful scene as well as show children how leaves change color in season.

Tenth, children with parents may bake food of earlier times, such as in colonial days. The city library will have cookbooks of foods prepared in earlier historical times.

Parents and children need to avail themselves of learning social studies content through informal means such as those listed above. Then too, supporting the school social studies program is of utmost importance. The parent should work closely with the teacher to provide for a quality social studies program.

## Engaging the Chid in the Social Studies

Parents need to actively engage pupils in doing and learning in the social studies. There are a plethora of possibilities for children to learn from the community. The following are suggestions:

1. make model furniture for the time period being studied. Furniture reflects time in history. A child can learn much history when looking at illustrations in reference books and use of illustrated technology, such as internet which clearly shows furniture in time.

2. make scrolls which the ancients used to proclaim or read messages to their subjects or citizens in a city.

3. make a mural on large sheet of paper, approximately, three feet by four feet. On the mural, put in items which were discussed in school or in the home. If a library book on the neighborhood was read to the child, the parents and the child/children may draw scenes pertaining to houses, a store, streets, sidewalk, stop signs, speed zone signs, among other possibilities, to show in developing the mural. Neatness in mural work should be stressed. The contents in the mural extend learnings from the library book for the child.

4. make and use puppets in telling about a current events item. A puppet can be readily made from a paper bag with a mouth, nose, eyes, and other facial features, neatly drawn in the proper place. The puppet may be used in telling about happenings in history as they are read and discussed from a library book. More elaborate puppets may be made as time goes on.

5. make a loom to weave cloth as was done in earlier times in history. The internet is a good source to use in making a loom. The making and using of a loom should relate to a library book read at home to to enrich what was studied in school social studies.

6. make a crown such as one worn by a king in earlier times in history.

7. make a map on a large sheet of paper placed on the floor to show learnings acquired from a library book. The map then may show nations of Central America, such as Honduras, Belize, Panama, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Each of these nations may be shown in a selected color. The map may be extended in learning through the drawing of an accompanying legend.

8. make a chart showing population figures of each nation studied, see # 7 above.

9. make a bulletin board display on content read from a library book. Develop a title for the display. Also, draw or cut out pictures for the display. Print related ideas below each picture.

10. make a model dairy with the milk house for milking cows. Purchase realistic plastic toy dairy cows; draw and color a pasture for grazing by these cows. Make a set of large cylindrical hay bales to feed the cows.

The above are provided as examples of what the child and parents may make to help children better understand what has been read. Children do enjoy making things in a learn by doing approach. The making and doing helps the child to develop skills in eye hand coordination. Neuro-muscular skills are valuable for any one through the life span of the individual. Children as well as adults need to fix and repair different items in their house. These items to fix do not require the help of a specialized service man, but can be done by many such as putting in a new door knob in a house. While achieving in skills, the child is also gaining ideas for use presently as well as in the future. For example in number one above when making model furniture, the following objectives may be achieved:

1. skill in using plywood and a jig saw. A carefully devised plan, accuracy, and neatness are desirable characteristics of good workpersonship.

2. using sandpaper to take out rough edges and provide smoothness in the final form is important.

3. varnishing each piece of furniture should be done in a careful, attractive manner.

4. explaining the use of the furniture to others should possess clarity and be meaningful. If the furniture represents colonial times in history, then the child needs to have a good background of information pertaining to life in the colonies.

5. being able to answer questions from observers is salient such as how each piece of furniture was made.

Many of these learning by doing activities may provide for avocational interests of a learner. Hands on approaches should be used often as they contribute to achieving worthwhile objectives of instruction. The following are additional examples of hands on learning and their contributions to the child academically and skill wise:

* making model means of transportation such as simple cars, trucks, airplanes, and boats. Cars, for example, may be put together from boxed parts purchased in the toy section of a store. These models are life like in appearance but greatly reduced in sized. These models come from different time periods in history. When supervising university student teachers in the public schools, the author noticed a collection of these model cars brought to school for display in a unit on transportation, taught cooperatively by the student teacher and the cooperating teacher. There was much interest generated in the display since pupils and their teachers from other classrooms came to view the model cars. Other transportation models were made, also, such as a truck made creatively from cardboard. Pupils in school did enjoy telling about their individual models and what they learned about transportation.

* making baskets can be fascinating in he home setting. The reeds can be purchased inexpensively in a hobby shop. They need to be soaked in water, according to the directions. The soaked reeds are then woven around upright, vertical short reeds. The short reeds, which are the height of the basket, should not be soaked. Holes, properly spaced, were drilled into a sheet of plywood for the base of the basket. The base is the size of the basket to be in length nd width. There are a plethora of nations which export beautiful baskets to other countries. The child should notice which nations commercially produced woven baskets come from such as the Peoples Republic of China, the Philippines, Peru, and Chile.

* making foods of other nations may be made by the parent with the assistance of children. Recipe books may be

purchased inexpensively or checked out from the public library. Recipes for making Chinese, Arab, Russian, Mexican, and Italian foods are readily available. The parents need to take the child out to eat in a restaurant which serves authentic dishes of a foreign nation. Interesting discussions will be inherent while eating as well as after leaving the restaurant. Much leaning here can certainly take place dealing with the social studies.

* making holiday decorations. Each culture observes certain holidays in a calendar year. It can be very enjoyable to make decorations in the home and display them. Wreathes can be made from evergreen parts, found in the bask yard. These may be woven to form a circular wreath. Decorations for the wreath may symbolize a variety of holidays in time. Thus, the decorations may be changed to harmonize with the seasons. Children do enjoy, for example, carving jack- o lanterns for Halloween, a unique holiday for a specific nations such s the United States. Relating the literature read to the actual holiday observed creates an improved understanding of specific occasions

* making pottery may interest many children in the home setting. Pottery making is one of the oldest human endeavors. People in ancient times, such as 3000 BC made pottery. Archeological remains of pottery have been found in abundance in Egypt and Iraq, two places having the beginning of civilizations such as along the Nile River and the Tigris/Euphrates River, respectively. Children enjoy hearing stories read of ancient civilizations where human beings first lived.

* making a covered wagon. This is an example of children studying the movement westward in the United States during the 1840s to California. When a child studies covered wagons, he/she has a plethora of questions about this means of transportation. There are numerous library books on the westward movement. The life style of individuals moving westward is fraught with adventure and danger. Wagon wheels could break in uninhabited areas. Food supplies might well run out for an entire traveling family. Enemies were on the lookout for travelers in covered wagons. The author has a difficult time to put himself in the place of a traveler in a covered wagon. By making a covered wagon with the parent, the child learns the details of its making as well as the related history involved in the westward movement.

* making birdhouses and feeders can indicate which birds migrate and which remain during the year. Careful observations made and recorded in a notebook on birds can truly be fascinating to the learner. Constructing the birdhouse and feeder

certainly involves eye hand coordination. The planning of the project, the buying and securing of materials, the doing facet of making the bird houses and feeders, are all a part of thinking critically and creatively in a construction endeavor. The joy of making discoveries about birds and their migration habits is truly an interesting learning experience.

Children can learn much informally at home in social studies. They may relate what is learned at and in the home setting with that of the school social studies curriculum. The home needs to support the social studies in the school setting. The two should not be separated but integrated and related to each other. The author will list additional experiments and demonstrations which can be done in the home setting.

* in fall a collection can be made of seeds from a variety of deciduous trees. The acorn can be collected from an oak tree; the walnut from a walnut tree, hickory nuts from hickory trees, and the list goes on. These nuts can make for a beautiful display in the home setting.

* a small garden may be planted. A seed catalog may provide information on what to plant, especially when a small garden plot is available. The seed catalog and seed package provides information on how far apart the seeds need to be planted and later watered when the plants are above ground. The seeds used for planting will have a germination rate listed on the outside of the seed package. A high germination rate, of course, is desirable. This rate provides information pertaining to what per cent of the seeds will sprout after being planted. A weed free garden is necessary. Other wise there are too many plants competing for water and root space. Sometimes a weed grows so fast that it towers the garden crop plants for sunlight. The garden crops need to be harvested at the right time. Peas and sweet corn get too mature if harvested late.

* fossil hunting can be interesting. Parents and children need to be on the lookout for places where fossils may be hunted. This can be an enjoyable activity for the entire family. A handbook may be purchased inexpensively and used to assist in fossil identification. It is fascinating to notice a fossil imprint of a fern plant of long ago.

* food chains pertain to making a diagram of who eats whom such as a hawk eating a mouse for sustenance. The mouse eats seeds for feed. More complex food chains may be described.

* renewable and nonrenewable energy sources need to be emphasized with the child in an informal manner such as in table

conversation. Non-renewable sources include petroleum and atomic sources whereas sunlight, wind, and water are renewable sources. Vocabulary terms needs to be used which are meaningful to the child, such as nonrenewable sources will run out and be no more eventually. Renewable sources are the opposite in that they do not run out but keep some stability in amount. The parent also needs to explain how sunlight provides energy such as in winter time, a car can be very warm inside, receiving energy from the bright sunlight in freezing temperatures. Pictures of wind turbines in California and Kansas may provide source of information to show how wind is used to provide energy in providing electricity for home heating and for appliance use.

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